Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: Chin Padden Ranch LLC, PO Box 5745, Katy, TX 77491

2. Type of action: Application to Change a Water Right 39F 30119976

3. Water source name: Groundwater

4. Location affected by project: Section 2, T4S, R61E, Carter County

5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits: The Applicant is requesting to change the place of use to add 2 tanks. The places of use including the existing tank are NENWSW Section 2, T4S, R61E, NWNESW Section 2, T4S, R61E & NWNWSW Section 2, T4S, R61E, all in Carter County. The addition of stock tanks will enable the producer to better utilize available grazing land. The DNRC shall issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)

   Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
   Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
   Montana Department of Environmental Quality
   United States Fish and Wildlife Service
   United States Natural Resource and Conservation Service
   Montana Heritage Program
   Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity **–** The source of water supply is groundwater and therefore not classified as dewatered by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The groundwater source has been in use since 1961 and the use will not be increased. No additional effect to water quality will result from the addition of stock tanks to a stock watering system.

Determination: No impact

Water quality **–** The groundwater is not listed as impaired by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the use of groundwater for stock watering has no potential to degrade groundwater quality.

Determination: No impact

Groundwater **–** Because the project is only to add stock tanks to an existing stock watering system, no increased groundwater use is proposed, and no degradation of groundwater quality is likely.

Determination: No impact

DIVERSION WORKS – The pipelines from the well to the new stock tanks are in place and buried. The locations of the new stock tanks have been used for watering cattle in the past. The construction of the project is complete, and the operation will not create barriers to migration or alter any stream flow or channel characteristics.

Determination: No impact

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species **–** According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program, there are no plant species of concern in the project area and only one animal species of concern, the Greater Sage Grouse. The well has been appropriating groundwater since 1961 and no additional impact would occur to any surface water sources. The pipeline is buried and creates no barriers. The specific area of the project is not within Sage Grouse Habitat as mapped by the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.

Determination: No impact

Wetlands **–** The only wetlands in the area are reservoirs created by dams for stock water. No wetlands will be affected, and none are proposed.

Determination: No impact

Ponds **–** There are no ponds in the project area at present, and none are proposed.

Determination: No impact

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE – The dominant soil type in the project area is Archin - Ynot complex, a well-drained sandy to clayey soil with variable salinity.

Addition of stock tanks has no probability of degrading soils, altering their moisture content, or leading to saline seep.

Determination: No impact

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS – Existing vegetative cover is native grasses, Grazing has a limited potential to alter native vegetation, but the addition of stock tanks allows the effects of grazing to be less concentrated allowing grasses to recover. It will be the responsibility of the land owner to control and prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

Determination: No significant impact

AIR QUALITY – Addition of stock tanks to a stock watering system has no potential to alter air quality.

Determination: No impact

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES – The project is not located on State or Federal Lands.

Determination: Not applicable

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY – The requirement of pumping water to the additional stock tanks will use energy. No other demands on environmental resources of land, water, and energy will be changed.

Determination: No significant impact

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS – There are no known locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

Determination: No impact

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES – There are no local wildness or recreation areas and no access o0f any sort through the project area.

Determination: No impact

HUMAN HEALTH - Addition of stock tanks to a stock watering system has no potential to affect human health.

Determination: No impact

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*
*Yes___ No_**X**__ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

Determination: No impact

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

Impacts on:

(a) *Cultural uniqueness and diversity?* No significant impact

(b) *Local and state tax base and tax revenues?* No significant impact

(c) *Existing land uses?* No significant impact

(d) *Quantity and distribution of employment?* No significant impact

(e) *Distribution and density of population and housing?* No significant impact

(f) *Demands for government services?* No significant impact

(g) *Industrial and commercial activity?* No significant impact

(h) *Utilities?* No significant impact

(i) *Transportation?* No significant impact

(j) *Safety?* No significant impact

(k) *Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?* No significant impact

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts are recognized.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts are recognized.

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** None

4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** The only viable alternative to the proposed project is the no-action alternative. The no-action alternative does not prevent any significant environmental impacts and

prevents the applicant from increasing the efficiency of his operation and maximizing the use of grazing land.

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative: Issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.

2 Comments and Responses: None

3. *Finding:*
*Yes___ No_**X**__ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?*

If an EIS is not required, explain <u>why</u> the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: An environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis because no significant impacts were recognized or likely from the addition of stock tanks to an existing stock watering system.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Mark Elison
Title: Deputy Regional Manager
Date: 10/26/2018